



TRAIL COUNT 2015



In partnership with:

Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority
Guadalupe Park Conservancy
Keep Coyote Creek Beautiful
Five Wounds Neighborhood
Save Our Trails
County of Santa Clara Health Department

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Mixed Results

Several count stations had a decline in use. This is the first broad decline. Refer to p. 8.

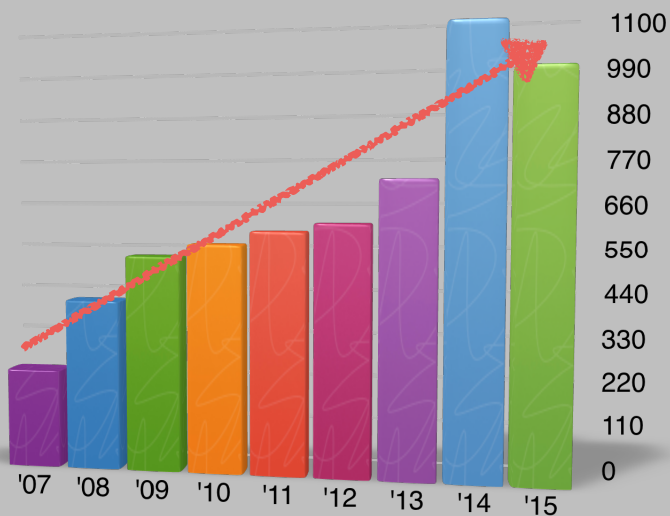
Recreation & Commuting

52% of Guadalupe River Trail users said that the commute or run errands via the trail

Commute Pattern

Most Count Stations show a morning and evening pick that reflects a weekday commute

Guadalupe River Trail - at Coleman Avenue



Guadalupe River Trail - at River Oaks Pedestrian Bridge

Guadalupe River Trail at Coleman Avenue: **Upward Trend**

1,082 in 2014, 977 in 2015; a **9.7% decrease** from the prior year.

This station had seen a 50% increase in 2014.

Guadalupe River Trail at River Oaks Parkway

More people counted at this station than ever before: **2,270** counted along the trail and pedestrian bridge!

Executive Summary

Trail Count is an annual count and survey conducted along San Jose's Class I off-street trails. This event gathers valuable data from trail users that supports improved planning, design and grant-writing efforts. The 2015 count was the ninth annual count in San José.

Trail Count 2015 occurred on Wednesday, September 23. There were ten count stations; more than any prior year.

Volunteers at Count Stations noted both increases and declines in usage. A few factors that may have impacted usage rates this year included:

- The count occurred one week later than past years.
- The Guadalupe River Trail was closed between Tasman Drive and Gold Street, allow the nearest station saw an increase.
- Counters at the Five Wounds (future) Trail reported a homeless encampment which may have discouraged trail usage. The trail is used by children and parents traveling to the nearby elementary school.

This year's survey asked trail users for input on the Trail Program's broad goals for building a 100-mile network and doing so by 2022 (per the City's General Plan and Green Vision). Staff is preparing a Strategic Plan to provide the City Council with options for advancing the pace of trail development. Insights from trail users will help frame options for the Council's consideration.

Nine years of Trail Counts and surveys is only possible by partnering with public agencies and depending on company champions and individual volunteers.

Background

Purpose

Trail Count was initiated in 2007, primarily to address the lack of specific data regarding the number of trail users affected by trail closures due to Downtown San Jose's frequent special events. A formal Trail Closure Policy was instituted due to the documented number of impacted trail users. Since then, Trail Count's objectives have expanded to quantify the number of daily trail users, how the individual trail systems are being used (e.g., for recreation and/or active transportation), user perceptions, and year-to-year changes in trail usage.

The survey component of Trail Count is used to gather



feedback and suggestions from trail users on current operations, their needs and suggestions for improvements. For 2015, the survey focused on where and how the City should focus its efforts to build out the planned 100-mile trail network (currently at 57 miles). Staff is preparing a Strategic Plan to advise the City Council on options and strategies, so this timely data collection will inform that planning process.

Data gathered from Trail Count makes the City more competitive for limited grant funding. As this report is being written, the City has been notified that a \$5,200,000 grant may be awarded by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission as part of the Active Transportation Program. This funding will support construction of the Coyote Creek Trail between the Berryessa BART Station and Watson Park. Data from Trail Count was used to project anticipated usage along this future trail corridor. *Grant applications commonly ask for usage and other data which is only available by conducting Trail Count.*

Seeking trail usage data is consistent with the Trail Program's vision of becoming the national leader for urban trail development. Data collection provides staff with the information necessary to make better planning, design and operational decisions. Trail Count data also helps staff to advocate for maintenance funds and other budget recommendations made to the City Council.

The primary data collection objectives were:

1. Ascertain weekday travel volume.
2. Determine trail user needs, demographics and perceptions.
3. Confirm that trails support both recreational and active transportation.
4. Determine the share of daily "commuters".
5. Determine preference for continued distributed trail development or a stronger focus on core systems first.

Partnership

Trail Count relies heavily on volunteers to count trail users and distribute survey cards - Trail Count participants included:

- **Guadalupe River Park Conservancy** managed and staffed the Coleman Avenue Count Station.
- **Silicon Valley Bicycle Coalition** supported outreach to its many members.
- **Five Wounds Neighborhood** managed and staffed the Five Wounds station at East Santa Clara Street.
- **Keep Coyote Creek Beautiful** staffed a new station, at Coyote Creek and Singleton Road Crossing.
- **City of San Jose - Department of Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services** managed the overall event and volunteer recruitment for remaining count stations.
- **County of Santa Clara Health Department** staff volunteered at stations.

- The private sector - Corporate participants included staff from **Callander Associates, CH2M-Hill Inc., Mark Thomas & Company, Inc., and GHD Inc.**

Analysis

Planning Process

This year's count was held on Wednesday, September 23. The month of September was selected because:

1. School is in session.
2. Weather is mild with rain unlikely.
3. Daylight hours extend past 6:00 pm.
4. A number of grant applications are due late in the year making data timely.
5. The month is recommended by the [National Pedestrian and Bicycle Documentation project](#).



A 12-hour count at all stations is highly desirable. However, volunteer resources are limited. Peak Hour counts (7:00-9:00 AM and 4:00-6:00 PM) were used at stations during the typical morning and evening commute periods to capture the likely peak periods. A peak-hour count is consistent with the recommendations of the National Bicycle and Pedestrian Documentation Project.

The National Bicycle and Pedestrian Documentation Project's standard recommended counting interval for a PM Peak weekday count is 5:00-7:00 PM. However, their recommendations states that "if you have been doing counts using previously established time periods, please keep using these same time periods for all future counts in order to be consistent." The City of San Jose has previously used 4:00 to 7:00 PM as its peak hour which is consistent with automotive commutes.)

Count Station Descriptions

1. **Guadalupe River Trail at Coleman Avenue:** The station is located north of downtown San José where many people enjoy the 250-acre Guadalupe River Park & Gardens. The park's continuous trail borders large employers and housing developments. The Guadalupe River Trail system extends 9 miles from downtown to Silicon Valley's Golden Triangle (major employers include Cisco, Cadence, eBay). A 12-hour count was conducted.
2. **Guadalupe River Trail at San Fernando Avenue:** This station is centrally located in Downtown San José. Over the past several years, the count location has been shifted from Park Avenue to San Fernando Street because the circuitous route at Park Avenue makes it difficult to determine who to count. Even with this year's altered location, we found some confusion by volunteers on the persons that they should count. Its proposed that this count station be adjusted once again, with persons counting from San Fernando Street's north side, where there

is only the upper and lower trail along the east bank, and no additional trails on the west bank. A 12-hour count was conducted.

3. **Guadalupe River Trail at River Oaks Parkway:** This station has the highest count and captures travel along the trail and to the perpendicular River Oaks Parkway which links Light Rail to the Rivermark Neighborhood. A 12-hour count was conducted.
4. **Los Gatos Creek at Auzerais Avenue:** This reach of the regional trail system is disconnected and short (0.5-mile). The trail links Willow Glen (via Lonus Street, near Lincoln Avenue) to Midtown, a neighborhood to the west of Downtown. Auzerais Avenue provides a low-volume arterial roadway with a signed bikeway leading directly to the Guadalupe River Park and trail near the Children's Discovery Museum. Usage along the trail was the same as the year prior, but more persons with dogs were seen as the new Del Monte Park with a dog park element came on-line a few months ago. Morning and Evening Peak counts were conducted.
5. **Los Gatos Creek at Hamilton Avenue:** The regional trail system in this area is continuous with 9 miles of existing trails linking San José, Campbell and Los Gatos. Los Gatos Creek is recognized as one of Silicon Valley's most popular trails. The trail is adjacent to employment, housing, retail and park/open space. A 12-hour count was conducted.
6. **Five Wounds Corridor at William Street:** This former railway corridor was acquired by the regional transit agency for the BART (Bay Area Rapid Transit) project. Land between Highway 101 / Lower Silver Creek to Story Road is likely to be developed as a landscaped urban trail at a future date. The community is well organized and advocating strongly for this development. Although currently undeveloped, the linear parcels are used by the community to walk through the neighborhood. Data collection at this early stage helps to show an existing need and support future use projections. Morning and Evening Peak counts were conducted.
7. **Los Alamitos Creek near Camden Avenue:** The 6-mile trail system links to Lake Almaden, Calero Creek and Guadalupe River Trail. The trail system travels through open space bounded by low density residential development. A 12-hour count was conducted.
8. **Three Creeks Trail at Willow Avenue / Bird Avenue:** This count station occurs along an interim trail which is not yet connected to nearby Los Gatos Creek Trail. The Save Our Trails organization gathered data at both the Willow Street entrance and Bird Avenue. Morning and Evening Peak counts were conducted.

New count stations for 2015 Trail Count:

1. **Coyote Creek Trail - Singleton Road:** This count station is in a more remote area of the trail system. The trail system crosses from one bank to another utilizing and old access road that spans over the creek. Creek waters are channeled through two large pipes. The Coyote Creek Trail station at Singleton Road

Crossing was added this year and championed by the Keep Coyote Creek Beautiful organization. The organization champions clean-up events and has advocated for removal of the in-channel crossing and creek restoration. Data gathered will support the City as it pursues grants for those efforts and a replacement pedestrian bridge. The City is currently preparing environmental and preliminary engineering studies for removal of the in-channel crossing.

2. **Communications Hill at Staircase:** The Communications Hill station was added this year and staffed by the neighborhood. The community's staircase has become a popular venue for exercise. Noise and traffic issues present a challenge for residents seeking quiet enjoyment of their homes and neighborhood. Data collected will help document the volume of staircase usage so the City can continue efforts to pursue a larger staircase at a location nearby and likely shift that use to an area with fewer nearby residences.

Data Collection Method

Volunteers were provided with the following tools.

- **Count Sheet:** Trail Count volunteers kept a handwritten tally of trail users. The counting sheet was customized for 12-Hour and Peak-Hour counts. The sheet provided space to count pedestrians, bicyclists and skaters, and their direction of travel. A "notes" field permits the recording of other user types (equestrian, Segway, etc.) or unusual conditions.
- **Survey "Postcard":** A postcard was offered to all trail users asking that they complete an on-line survey. The card included some basic information about the survey, and asked trail users to complete the survey by September 27. Visitors to the Trail Program web site found a 22-question survey for Trail Count 2015, hosted on SurveyMonkey.com.
- **Instructions:** A printed summary of how to conduct the counts and return the data to City staff for processing. Volunteers were asked to arrive at their count stations 15 minutes in advance and to fax/email the completed sheet at the end of their shift.

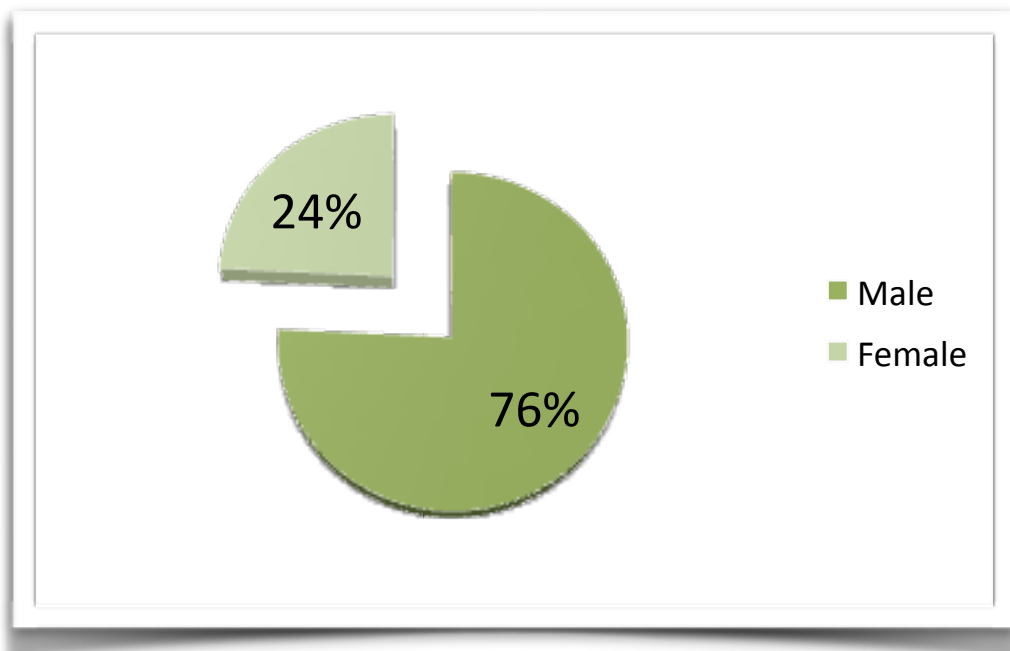
Findings

Count Stations

Over 7,700 trail users were counted this year. The table includes the prior year's count data for comparative purposes.

COUNT LOCATION	2014	2015	change
Guadalupe at Coleman	1083	977	-9.8%
Guadalupe at San Fernando	1253	1055	-15.8%
Guadalupe at River Oaks	1790	2270	26.8%
Los Gatos at Auzerais	169	167	-1.2%
Los Gatos at Hamilton	1437	1137	-20.9%
Five Wounds at William	369	183	-50.4%
Los Alamitos at Camden	765	819	7.1%
Coyote at Singleton	Not counted	184	First year count
Three Creeks at Willow/Bird	45 (at Willow)	39 / 23	-13.3%
Communications Hill at Staircase	Not counted	893	First year count
total		7747	

Counters are asked to identify bikers and walkers. However, the Guadalupe River Trail-Coleman Avenue Count Station (managed by the Guadalupe River Park Conservancy) also records the number of males and females using the trail. This count station documents that a quarter of trail users are female, which is consistent with national statistics for bicycle travel and trail usage.



On-Line Survey

The survey collected data from September 23 to September 27 through a Survey Monkey site. There were 290 respondents (a decrease from the 392 that responded in 2014). The survey included multiple-choice questions. Opportunities for respondents to provide written input was offered for several questions. Questions were themed about the City's existing and planned development approach for additional trails. Data was gathered to support an on-going Strategic Plan to define the resources and strategies necessary to pursue the 100-mile trail network goal by 2022.

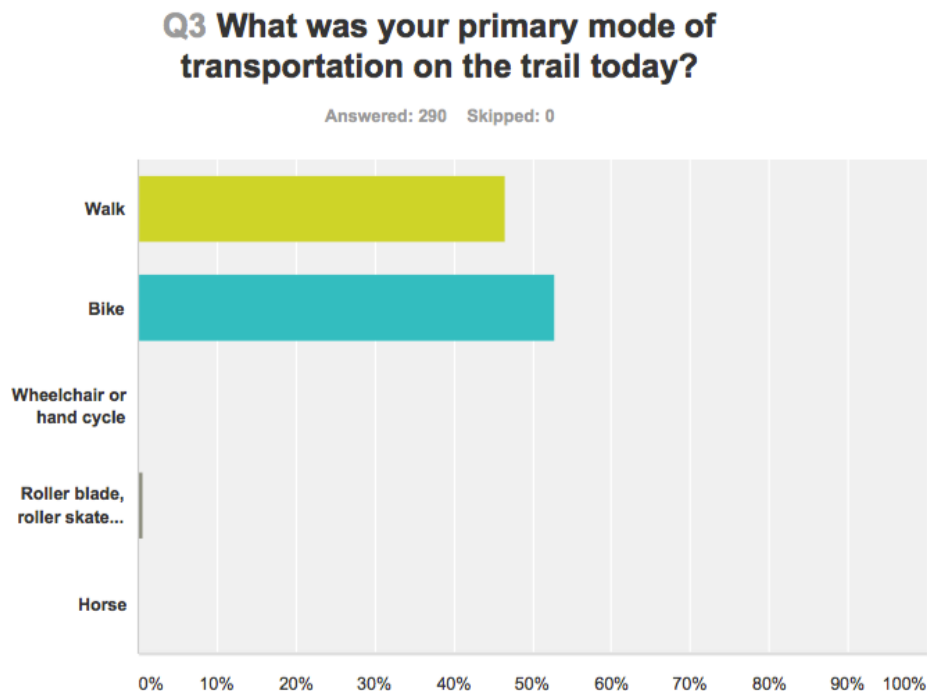
For the first question, we asked each respondent's age. Respondents varied in age, but no children took the survey:

- 19 years and younger: 0 (0.0%)
- 20 to 34 years: 48 (16.6%)
- 35 to 59 years: 179 (61.7%)
- 60 to 74 years: 58 (20.0%)
- 75 or older: 5 (1.7%)

For the second question, persons were asked their gender. A higher rate of females responded to the survey than were identified at the Coleman Avenue count station:

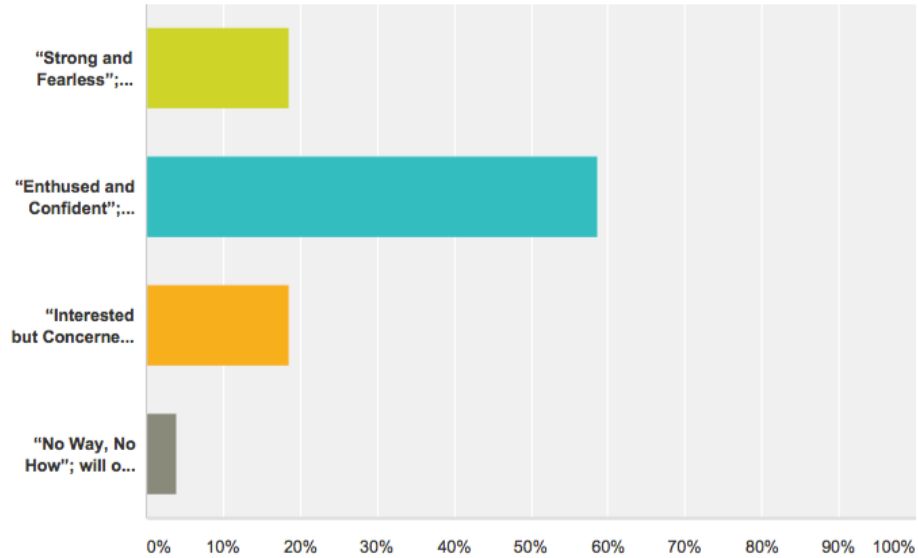
- 92 females (32.1%)
- 197 males (67.9%)

Graphics communicate the findings from the remaining questions.



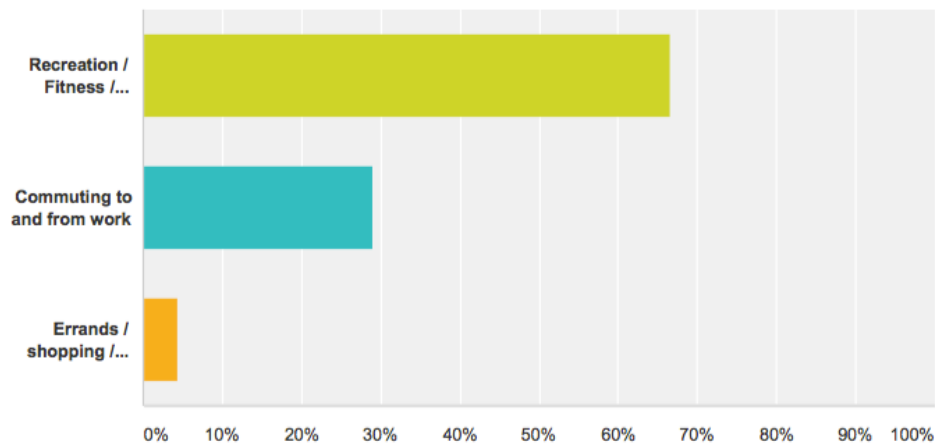
Q4 (if Bike) How would you describe your confidence as a bicyclist using on-street routes (not trails)?

Answered: 177 Skipped: 113



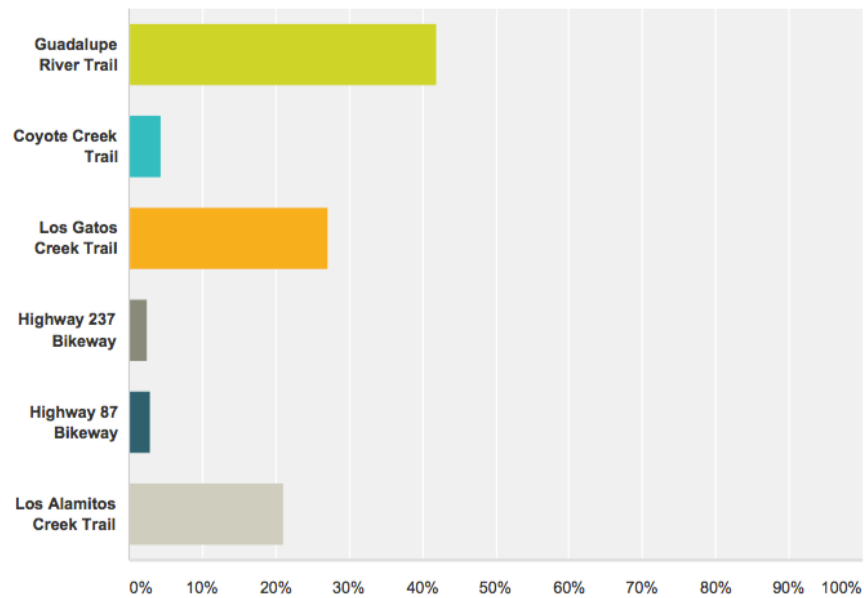
Q5 What was your primary reason for using this trail?

Answered: 290 Skipped: 0



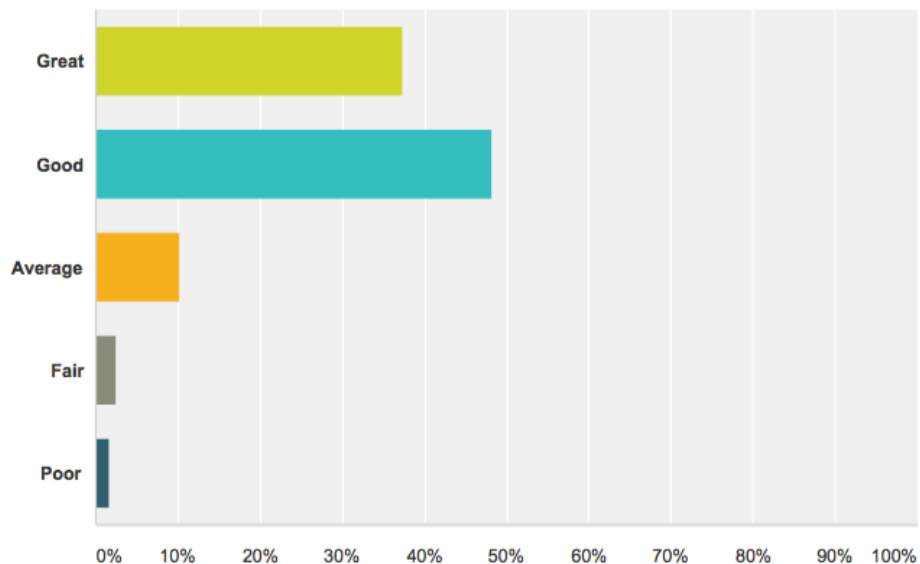
Q6 Which trail did you spend the most time on today?

Answered: 276 Skipped: 14



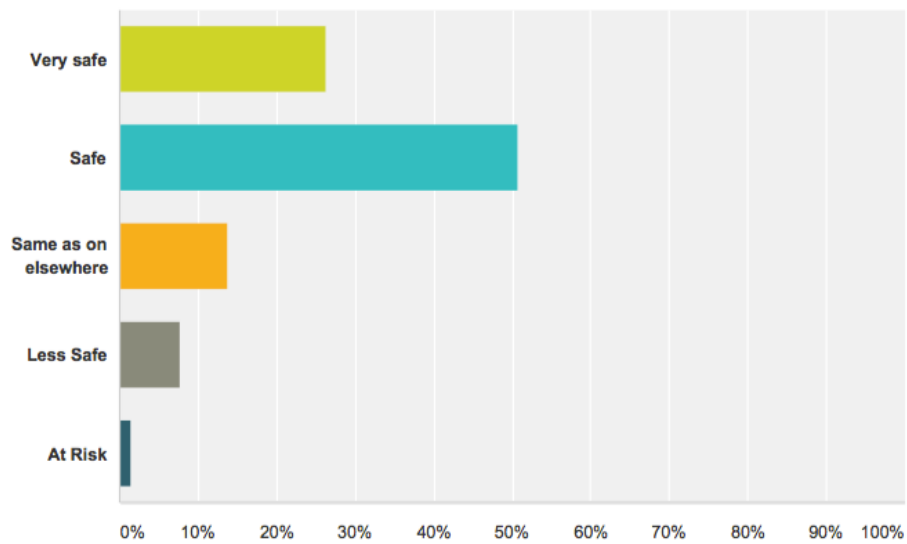
Q7 What was your general impression of the trail?

Answered: 284 Skipped: 6



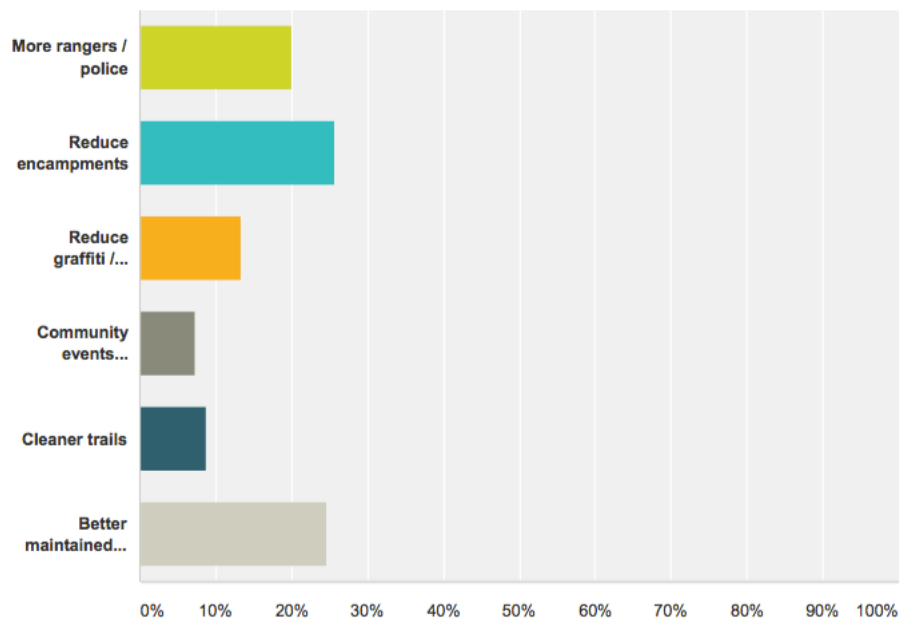
Q8 How safe do you feel on San Jose trails?

Answered: 284 Skipped: 6



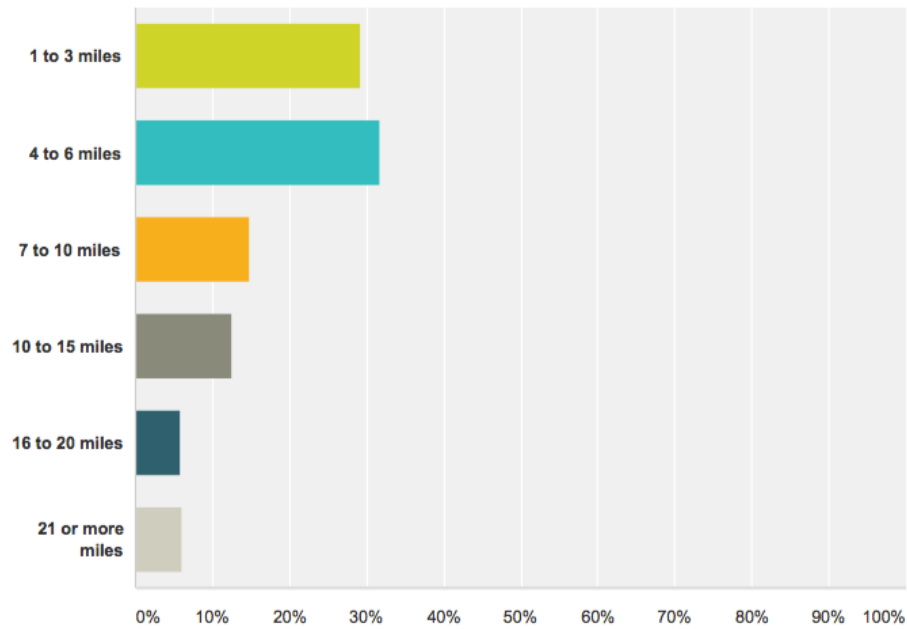
Q9 Pick your highest priority recommendation for making the trail feel safer.

Answered: 284 Skipped: 6



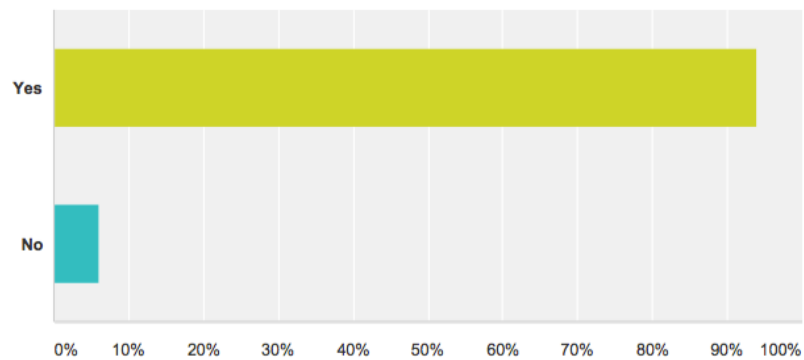
Q10 Estimate the number of miles that you traveled along the trail.

Answered: 278 Skipped: 12



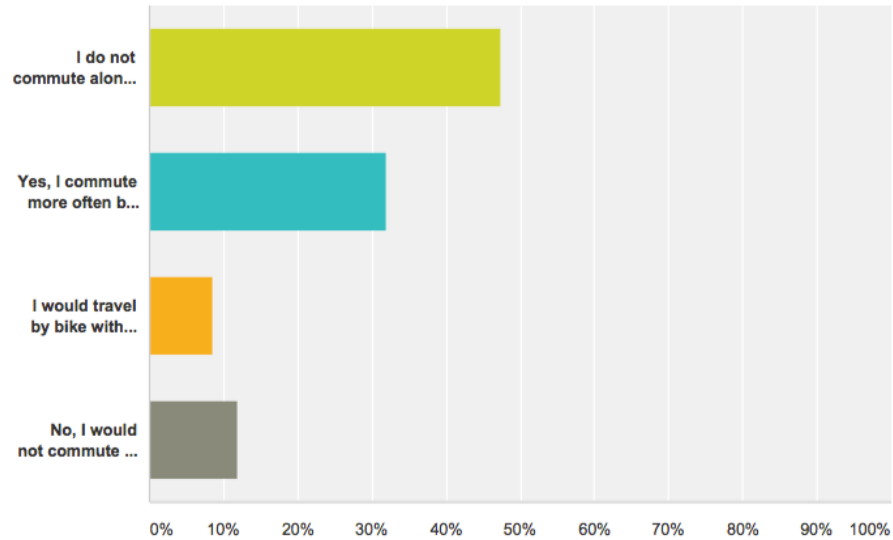
Q11 Does the trail motivate you to exercise more often?

Answered: 278 Skipped: 12



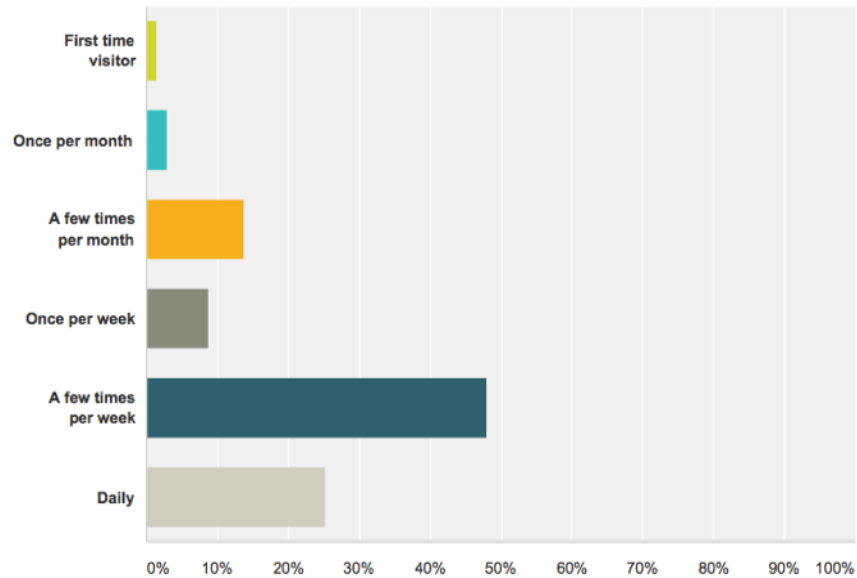
Q12 Does the trail motivate you to commute by bike more often?

Answered: 278 Skipped: 12



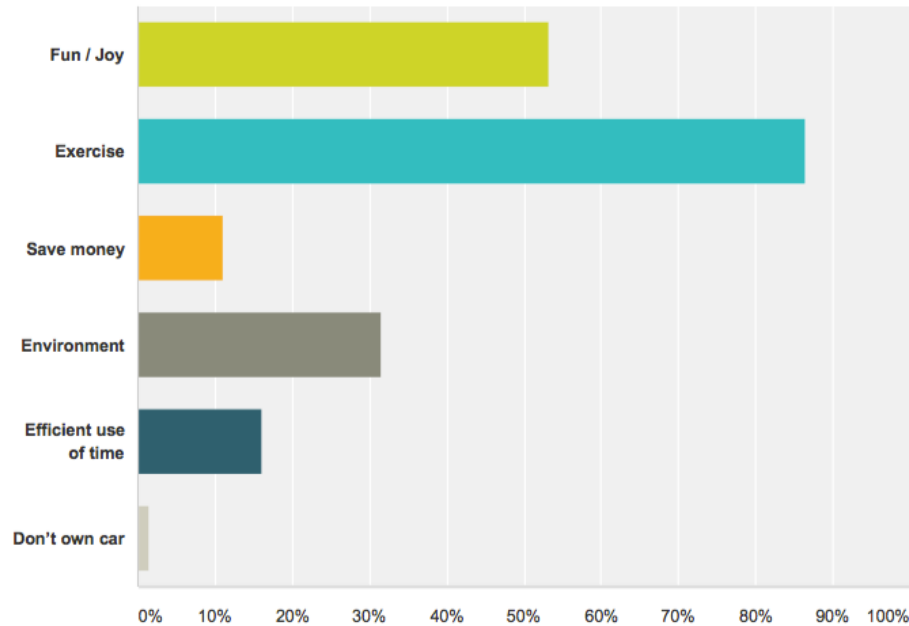
Q13 How often do you use the trail?

Answered: 277 Skipped: 13



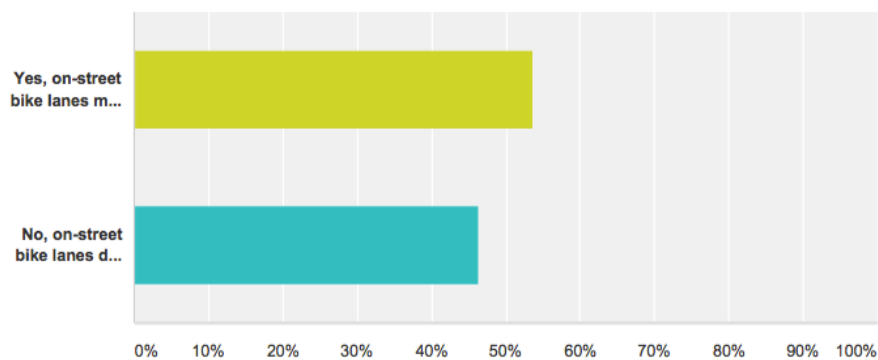
Q14 What motivates you to use the trail instead of a car, bus, etc.? (Pick top two reasons)

Answered: 272 Skipped: 18



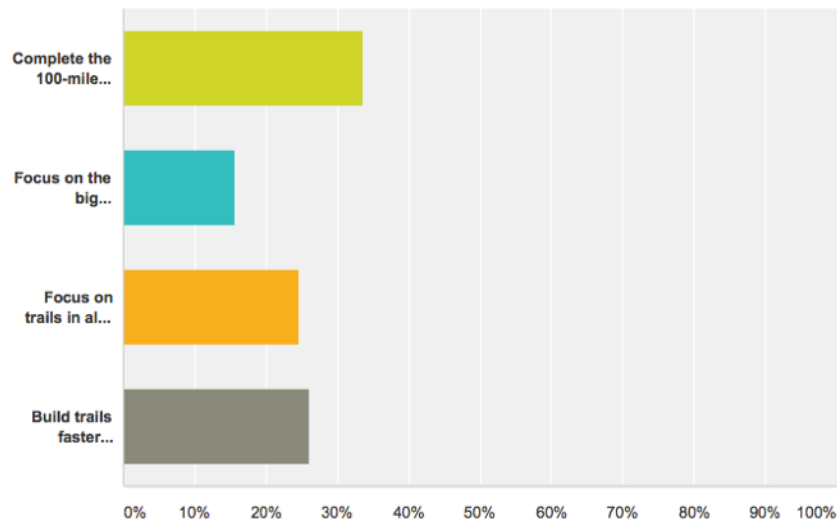
Q15 Do on-street bike lanes (bikeways) encourage you to visit trails more often

Answered: 278 Skipped: 12



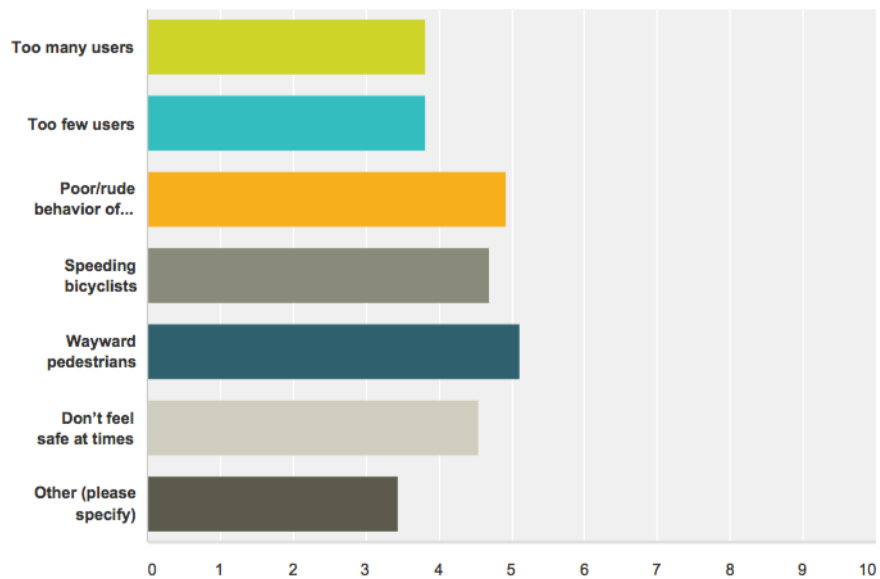
Q16 What effort would make San Jose a better trail city?

Answered: 268 Skipped: 22



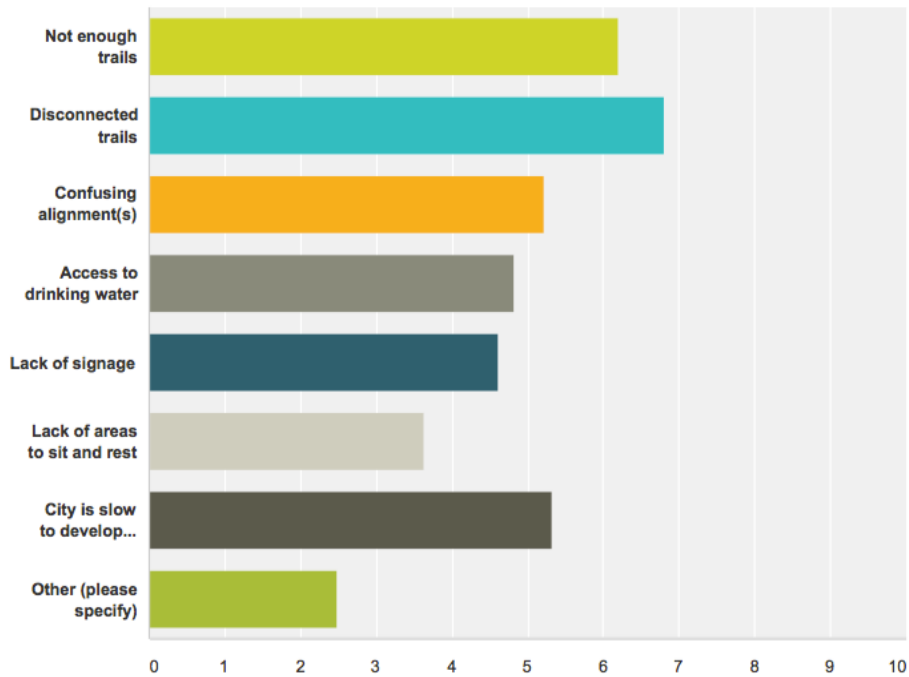
Q17 What do you like least about San Jose trail users? (Please rank the selections below.)

Answered: 235 Skipped: 55



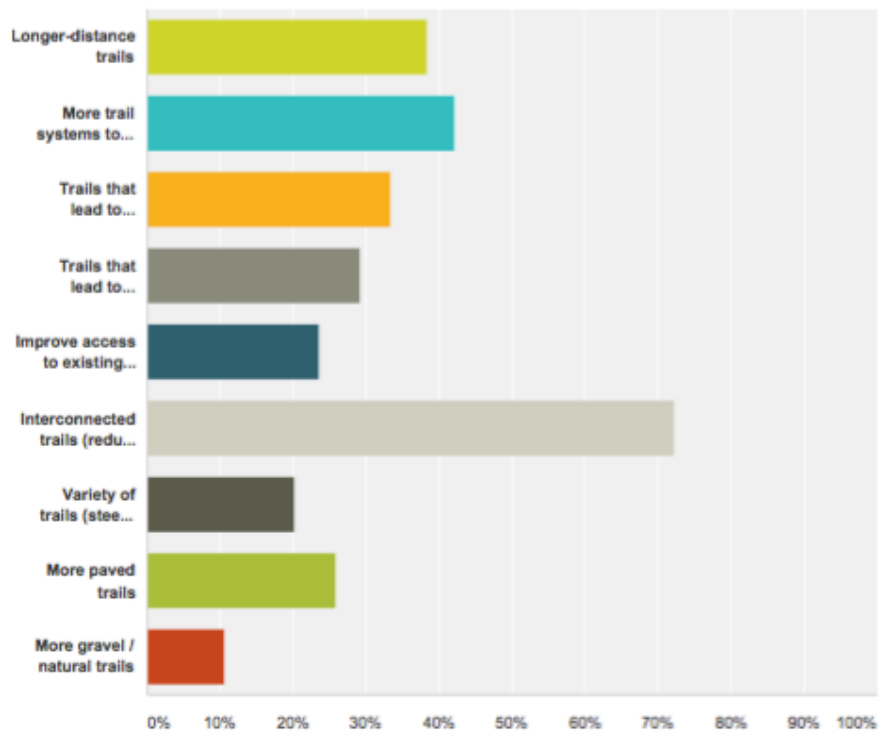
Q19 What do you like least about design of San Jose trails?

Answered: 240 Skipped: 50



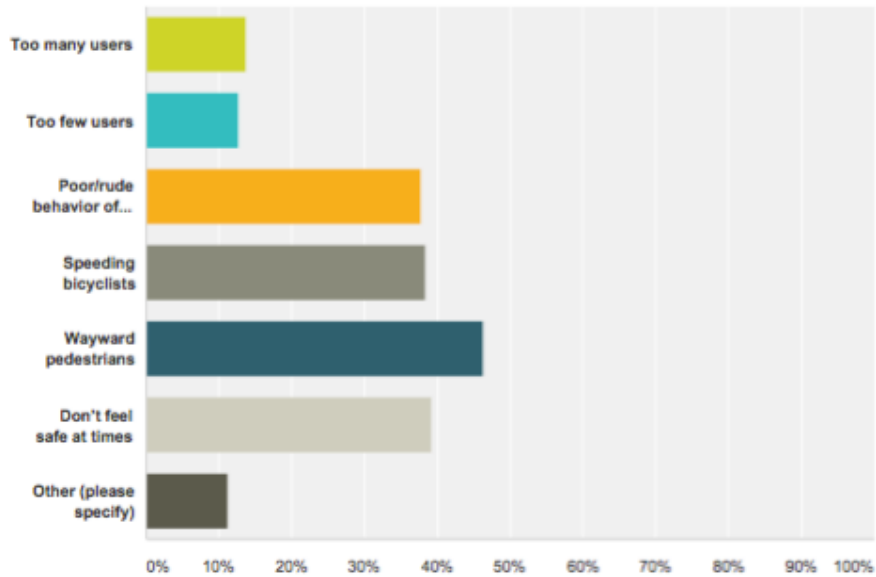
Q20 What would motivate you to use trails more often? (Select up to three)

Answered: 263 Skipped: 27



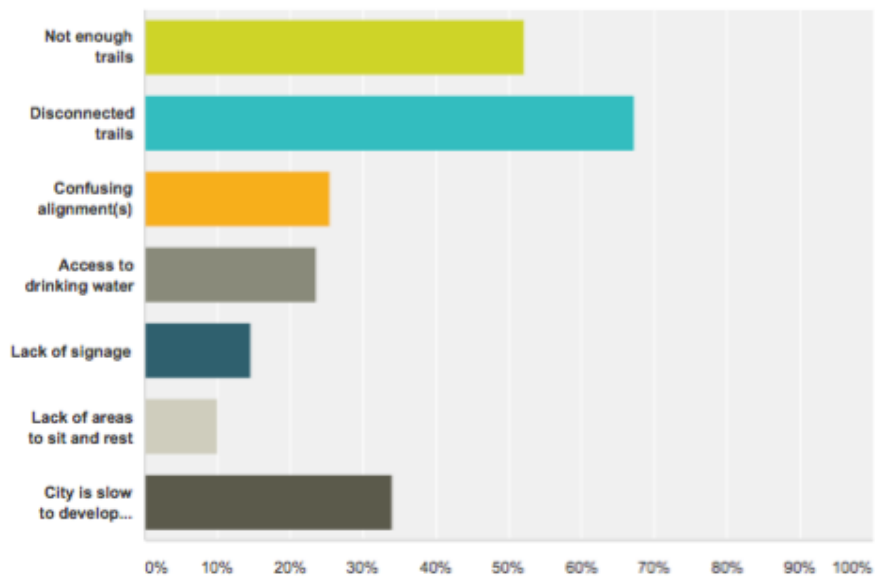
Q21 What do you like least about San Jose trail users? (Select up to three)

Answered: 268 Skipped: 22



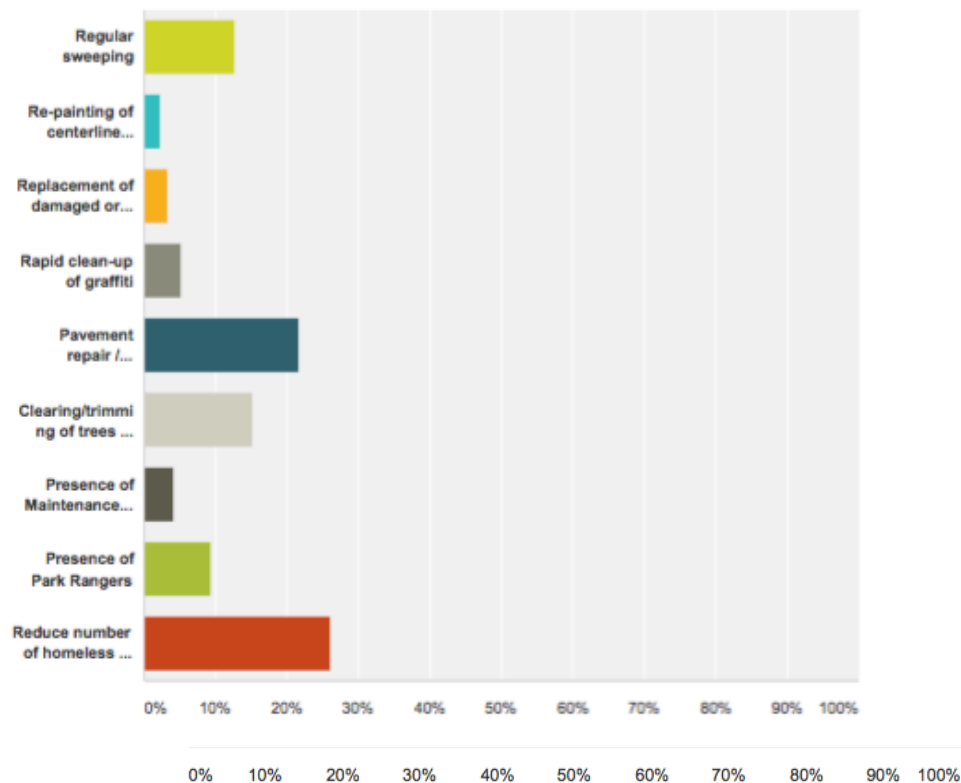
Q22 What do you like least about design of San Jose trails? (Select up to three)

Answered: 268 Skipped: 22



Q23 What could we do to improve your impression of San Jose Trails?

Answered: 268 Skipped: 22



For question 18, persons were given the opportunity to provide their own response. Some responses included a concern about parents not watching their small children, dog owners who don't pick up after pets, kids smoking, the homeless, persons walking on wrong side of trail, headphone users not hearing others, debris-broken glass, and general maintenance.

For question 24, respondents were provided an opportunity to share any final input with staff or the City Council. We asked, "Did we forget anything? What issues and concerns do you have? What should we do better? What do you want the City Council and City staff know?" Comments fell under a variety of themes:

Extra features/updates:

- Installing public repair stations would make the trails more bike friendly.
- Provide route guidance - sign parallel routes when trails are closed or unsafe after dark.
- Highway 87 Bikeway needs signage at on-street routing (near Curtner Avenue), and management of the homeless camps.
- Improve signage through Guadalupe River Trail to address dead-ends (Park Avenue, through The Gardens)

- Fix and/or add lighting along the trails.
- More mutt-mitt dispensers for dog owners using the trails.
- More “keep to the right” signs.

Maintenance:

- Repair signage.
- Improve landscape maintenance to increase sense of safety
- Regular sweeping near trees. Regular maintenance of trail surface.
- Trail system is nice but regular sweeping, rangers would help.
- Graffiti is cleaned up pretty fast and the trails themselves are in good shape

Staffing:

- Increase presence of Park Rangers

More trail development:

- Pave Guadalupe River Trail (west side, between Coleman Avenue and Julian Street)
- Would bike more if trails were connected and easier to follow.
- Build long distance trails.
- Trail are GREAT. We need more, everywhere. Getting trails along every single creek in town would be fantastic, making the creeks into accessible open space.
- Complete the Coyote Creek Trail and Penitence Creek Trail, with links to BART.
- More trail connections would be great.
- One of my reasons to move to San Jose was close access to Guadalupe River trail. A trail connection from Guadalupe trail to the Los Gatos creek trail would make feel safer.

Enforcement:

- Speeding bikers are a concern with walkers especially with dogs and children.

Perception:

- Invest equitably - perception that most money is invested in Willow Glen and west San Jose. Yes, most of the money is flowing to willow glen and the west side trails.

Appreciation:

- Keep doing the good work that you do.
- Your doing the best job.

Conclusion

Trail Count 2015 documents mixed results for the first time since San Jose began counting and surveying trail users.

The Guadalupe River Trail - Coleman Station had a very large increase in usage last year (up 50% from prior year) so this year’s decline was somewhat expected, and even though, shows a long-term increase in usage over time.

The Guadalupe River Trail - River Oaks station continues to show very high usage and experienced a large increase in use this year. The count station monitors travel along the trail system but also perpendicular travel as persons travel from the west bank trail (in Santa Clara) and the Rivermark Community, via the bridge to reach Light Rail and other resources to the west. Late in the day, counters noted that the area becomes popular with persons that appear to be enjoying evening strolls rather than recreation and active transportation.

The noted decline at other stations is difficult to explain. The Count did take place one week later in the month that has typically been the case. One station reported a homeless encampment that may have discouraged usage. But there were no other clues as to the drop at some stations.

Acknowledgement

Trails Program staff wishes to acknowledge the many volunteer participants that make Trail Count successful year after year.

The following organizations lead and gathered volunteers for various count stations:

- Guadalupe River Park Conservancy,
- Silicon Valley Bicycle Coalition,
- Keep Coyote Creek Beautiful,
- Five Wounds Community,
- and the Communications Hill neighborhood group

We also want to express thanks to our private corporate partners including:

- Callander Associates,
- CH2M-Hill Inc.,
- Mark Thomas & Company, Inc., and
- GHD Inc.

And special thanks goes to Mollie Tobias, the Department's ever-so-resourceful volunteer coordinator that makes the seemingly impossible happen year after year without a glitch.

Thank you all! And, if we've missed anyone, let me know!

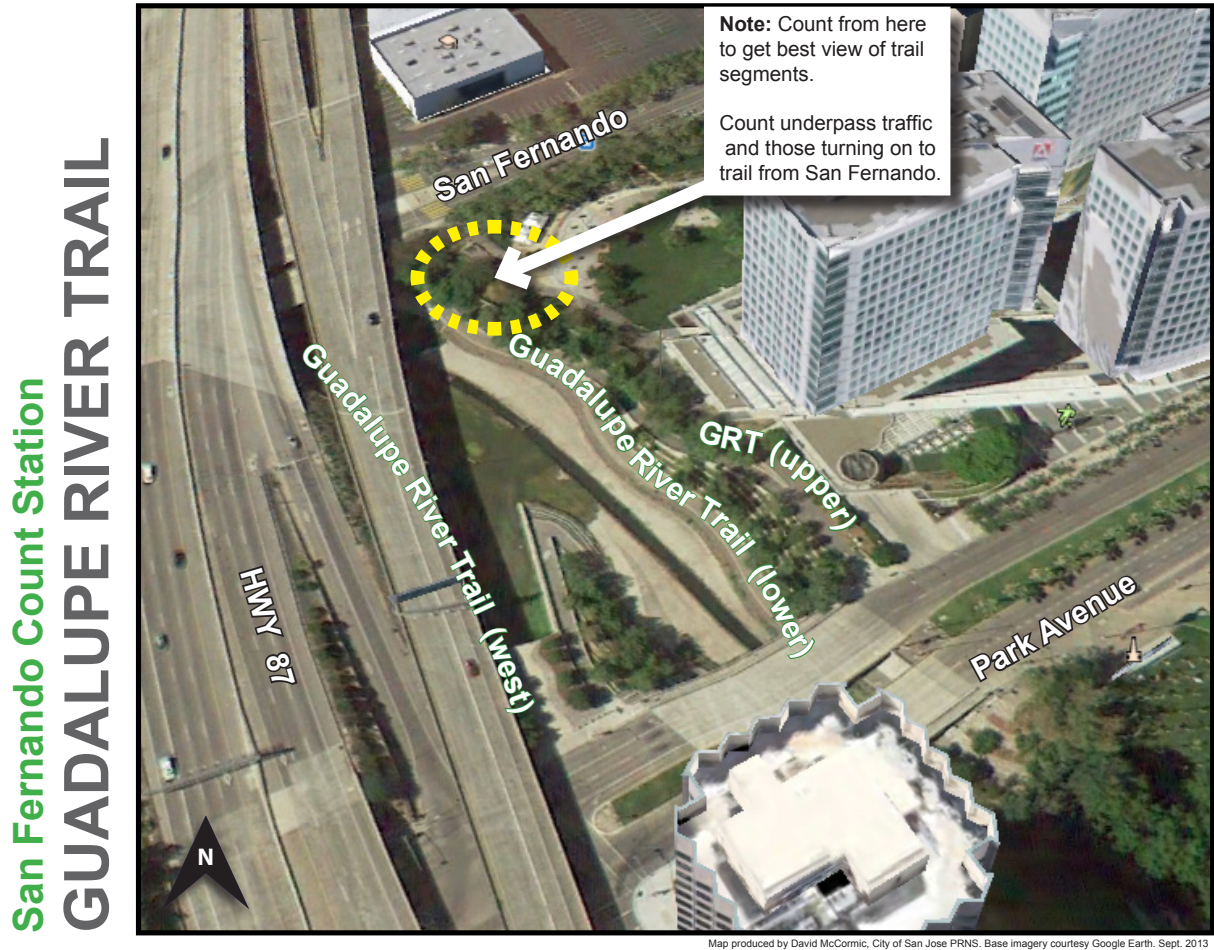
Yves Zsutty

Trail Manager

Department of Parks Recreation and Neighborhood Services

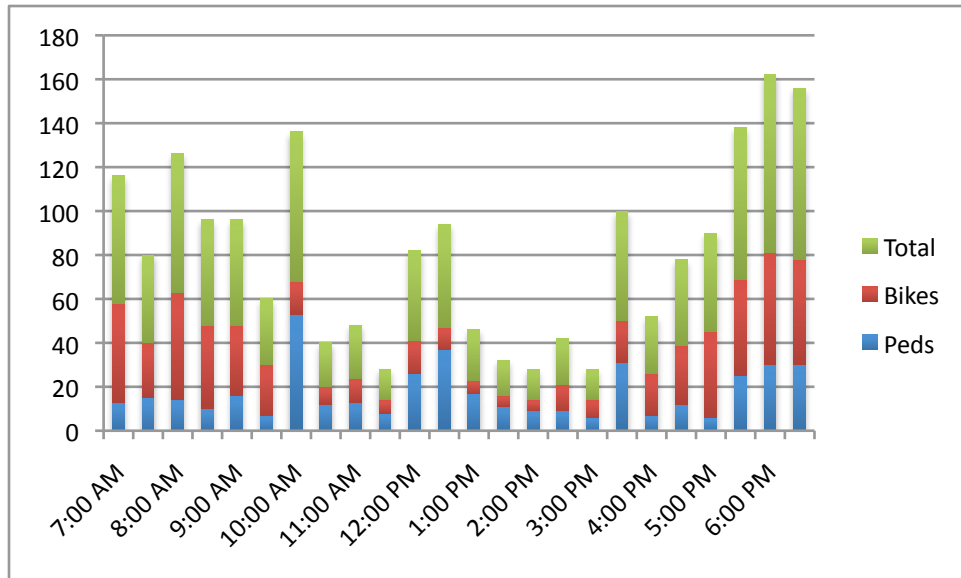
Appendix A - Count Station Maps (typical)

Sample Map provided to volunteers. This map is for the count station at Guadalupe River Trail - San Fernando Street

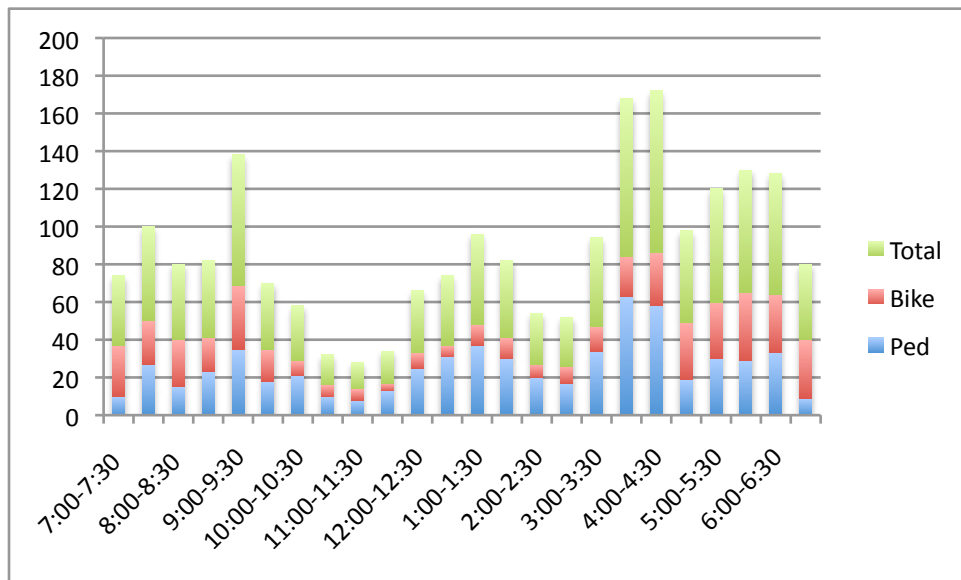


Appendix B - Graphs of Counts per Station

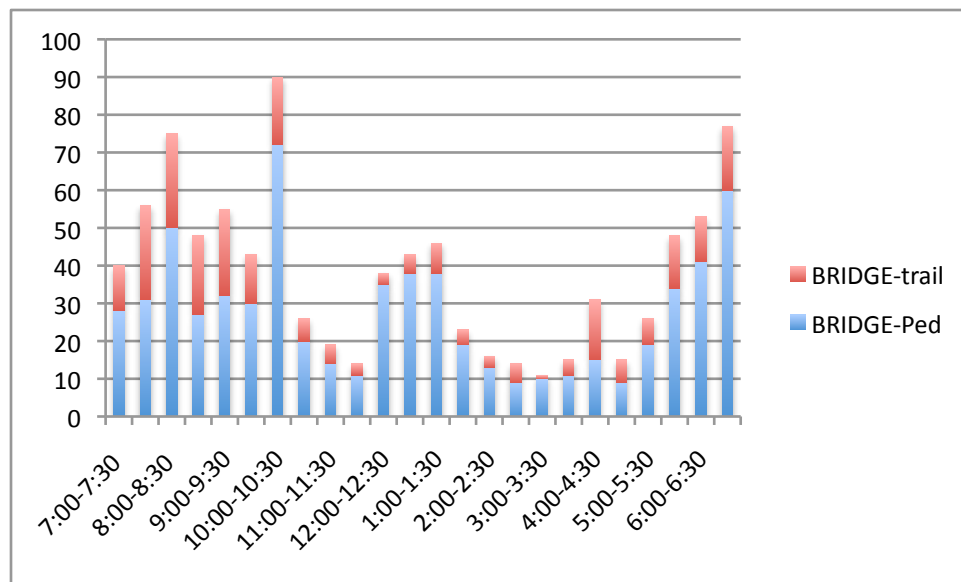
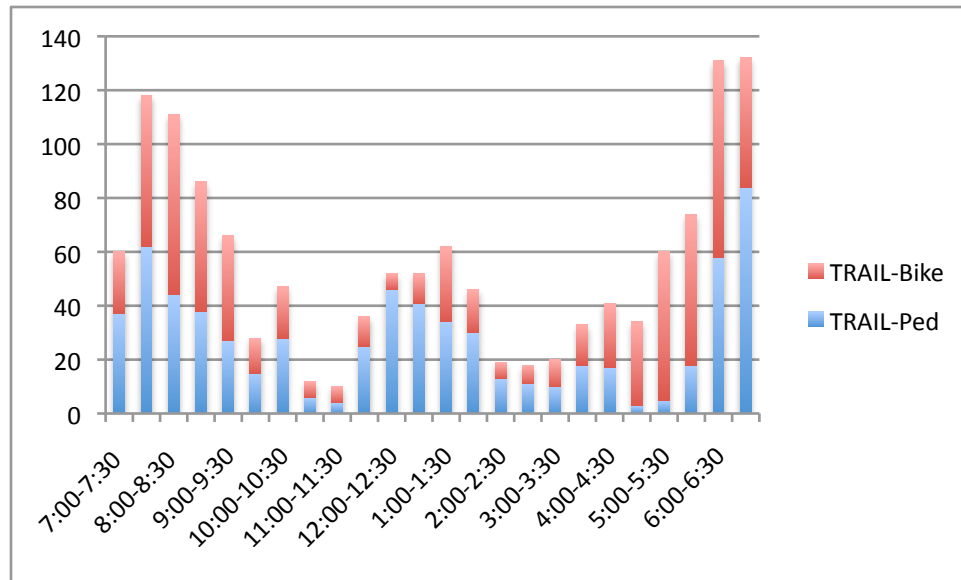
Guadalupe River - Coleman Avenue Station



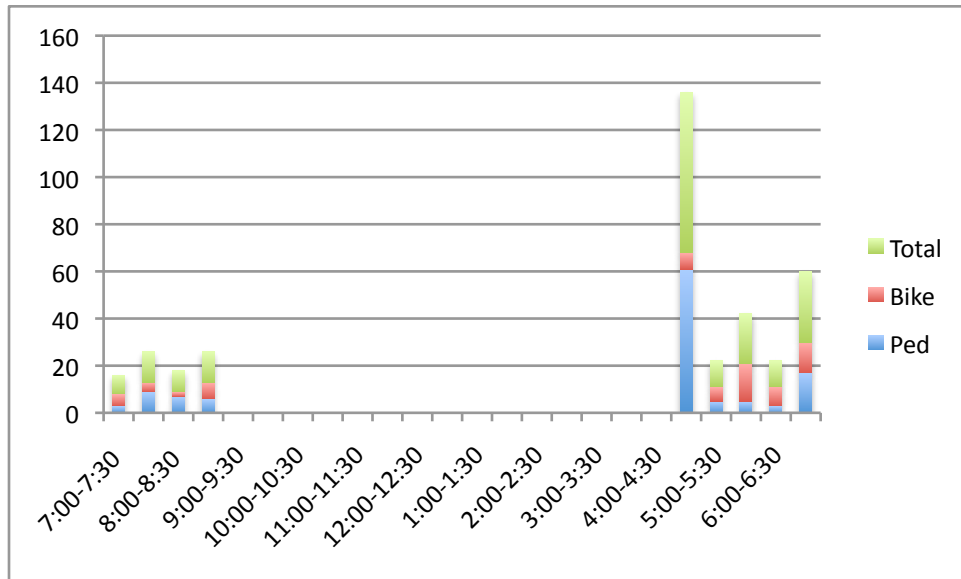
Guadalupe River - San Fernando Station



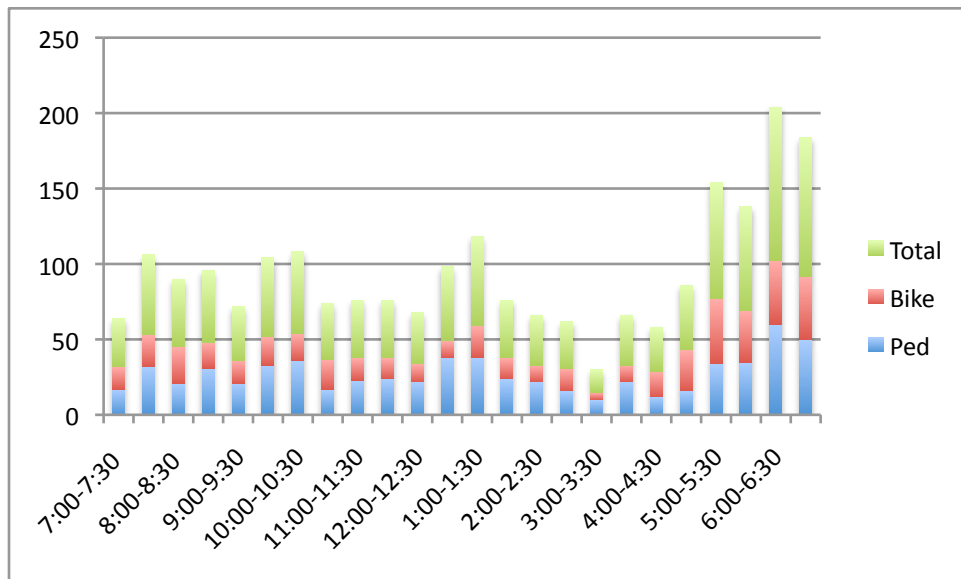
Guadalupe River - River Oaks Bridge (presented as Trail and Bridge data)



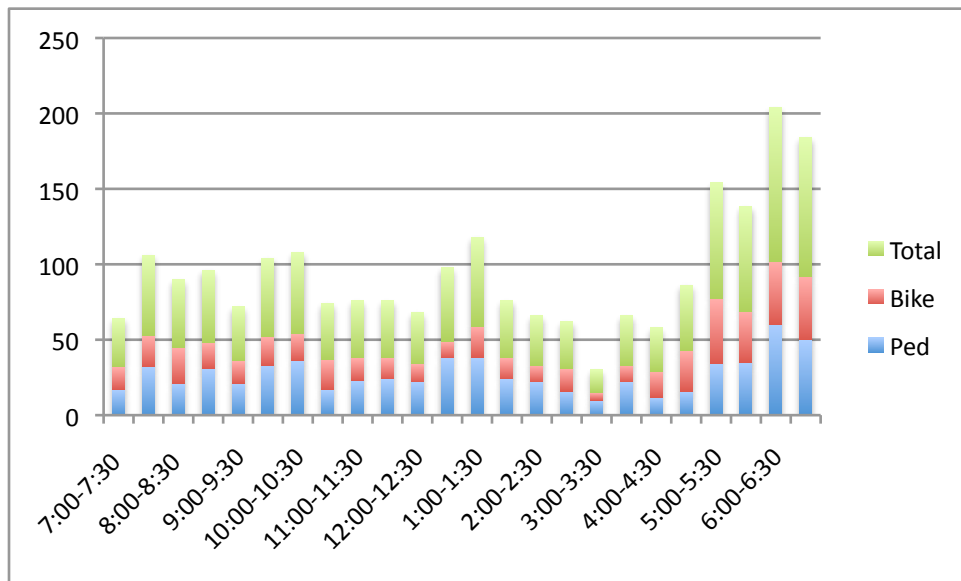
Coyote Creek Trail - Singleton Road Crossing



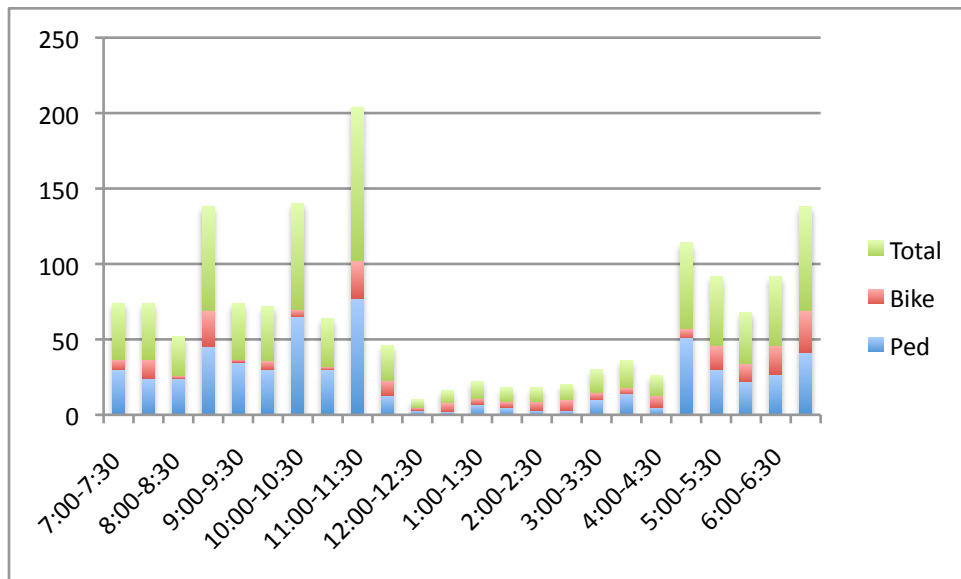
Los Gatos Creek Trail - Auzerais Avenue Station



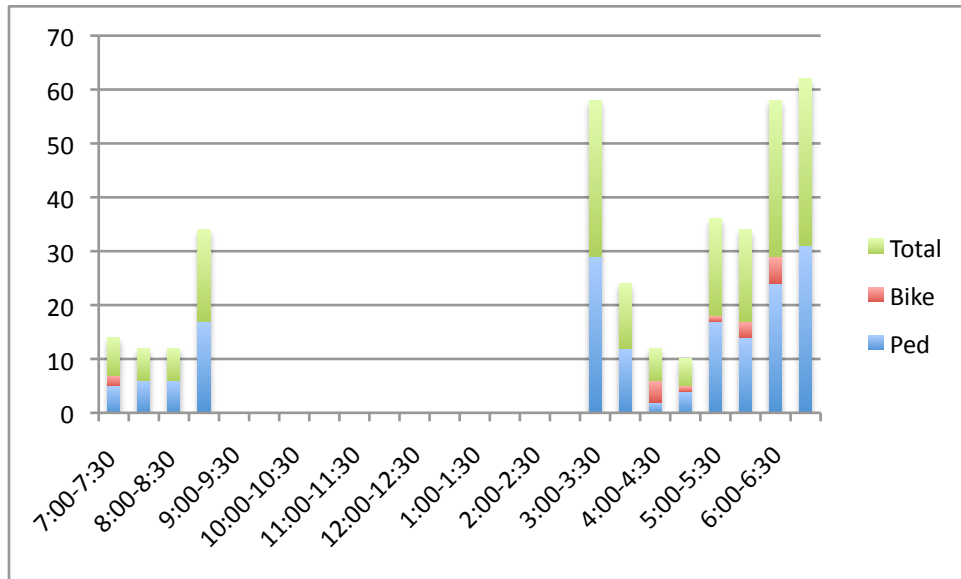
Los Gatos Creek Trail - Hamilton Avenue



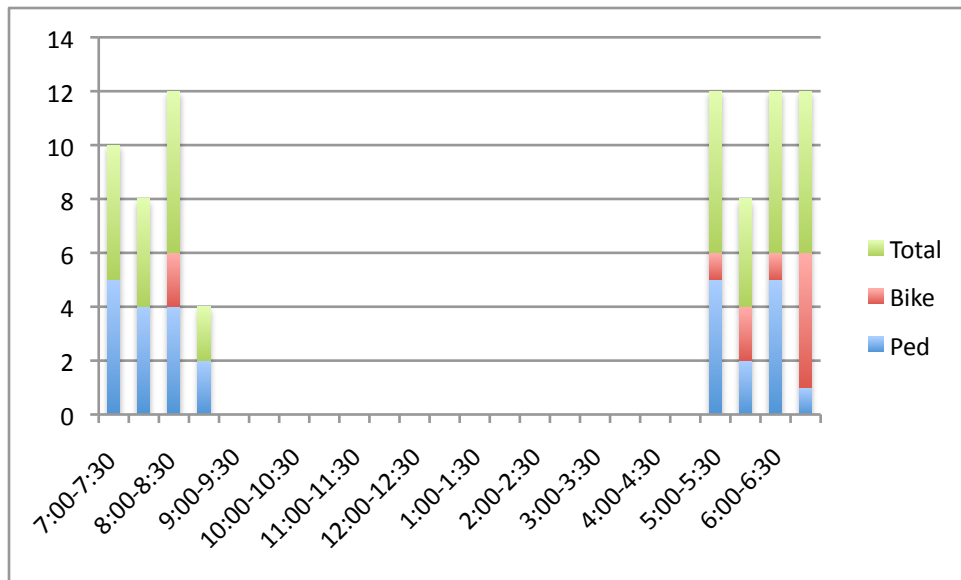
Los Alamitos Creek Trail - Camden Avenue



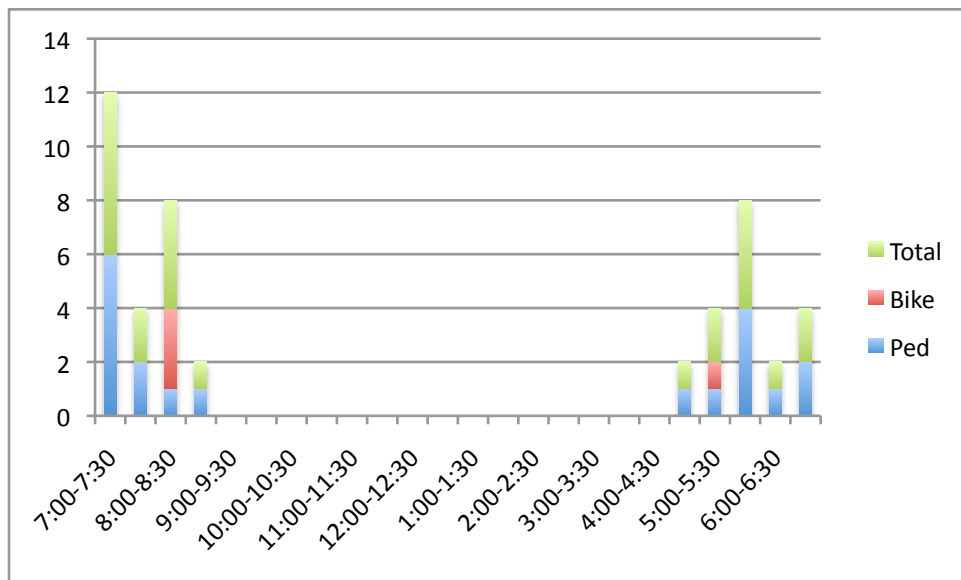
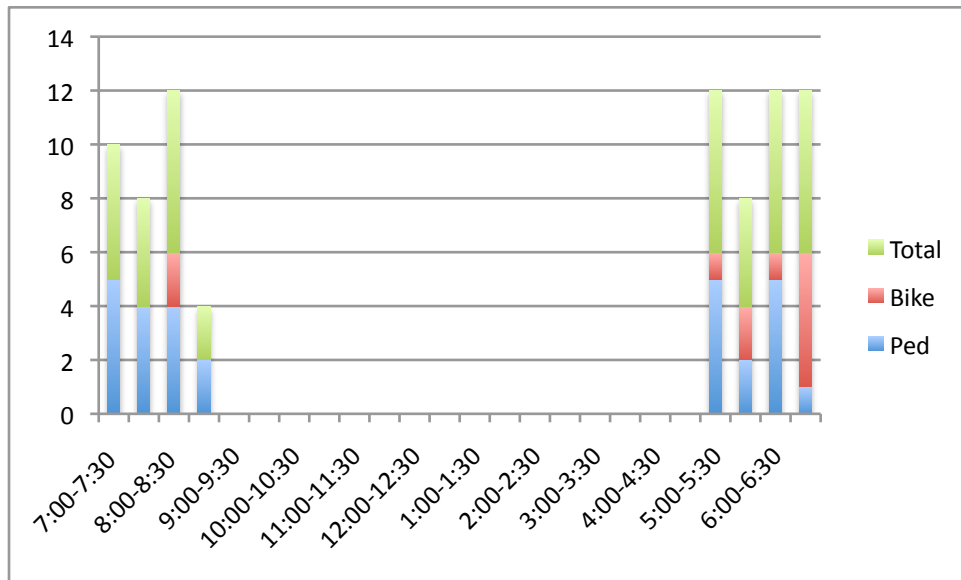
Five Wounds Trail - William Street



Three Creeks Trail - Willow Street



Three Creeks Trail (presented as Willow Street and Bird Avenue count data)



Communications Hill (presented as Trail and Staircase count data)

